

# **COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM**

## **TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM**

September 26, 2007 TMT Meeting

### **FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS**

Facilitator: Robin Gumpert

Notes: Erin Halton

The following notes are a summary of issues that are intended to point out future actions or issues that may need further discussion at upcoming meetings. These notes are not intended to be the "record" of the meeting, only a reminder for TMT members.

#### **Official Minutes/Facilitator Notes**

Notes from the 9/5 TMT conference calls were posted, and with no further comments or edits, were finalized during today's meeting.

#### **Albeni Falls Fall/Winter Ops: Lake Pend Oreille SOR 2007-USFWS-IDFG**

Russ Kiefer, Idaho, presented an SOR on behalf of IDFG and USFWS, which requested drawing Lake Pend Oreille down to an elevation no lower than 2055', preferably around November 20, to support kokanee spawning (a food source for endangered bull trout) in the lake. Russ noted that the rationale behind this recommendation was based on a decision tree and included consideration of the following factors: last year's operation during which the lake was drawn down to about 2051'; NOAA's 3-month forecast of above normal precipitation; and kokanee abundance numbers are low. Idaho believes the decision tree is a good step toward balancing the needs of resident fish in Idaho and listed fish in the lower Columbia. Scott Bettin, BPA, added that an additional balancing consideration is cost, which he estimated at \$4.4 million a year for BPA and \$12 million to the region to hold the lake up as is being requested this year. Kyle Dittmer, CRITFC, suggested Idaho look at improved forecasting methods and noted a trend in the region toward 'consensus forecasting' that the Climate Impacts Group and others are starting to utilize. Russ acknowledged these additional considerations.

**ACTION:** TMT members did not object to the SOR, and the COE planned to implement the operation as specified. Idaho acknowledged the need to revisit the proposed operation if unforeseen circumstances were to occur such as a major shift in the forecasts.

#### **Lower Granite MOP Operations**

Jim Adams, COE, shared that temperature profiles in the Clearwater were showing around 65 degrees at Orofino and a downward trend. Lower Snake temperatures were in the lower 60's and also trending downward. Given these conditions and the desire to have additional flow through the fish collection facility at Lower Granite Dam, the COE proposed lifting MOP restrictions at the project starting today. The salmon managers discussed this issue at FPAC and raised no objections to the proposal.

**ACTION:** The COE planned to lift the MOP restriction at Lower Granite today, 9/26. BPA and the COE will work out the details of the operation at Lower Granite and inform TMT via email or at the next meeting.

### **Little Goose Outage Follow-Up**

Jim Adams, COE, reported that double testing planned for October 9-10 at Little Goose was no longer necessary. Due to a ground fault that occurred earlier in September, the project had an entire powerhouse outage in order to diagnose what caused the ground fault and to repair what was broken. While this work was being conducted, the project took advantage of the outage to go ahead and perform the Double testing on the T-1 transformer. The project was brought back on line after a couple of days.

### **Emergency Action Plan**

Robyn Mackay, BPA, reported on the updated Appendix 2 Emergency Action Plan, noting that language in the preamble had been discussed and coordinated among the Action Agencies, and the pre-emptive actions were a list of actions BPA will take prior to declaration of an emergency. The emergency actions list had been reviewed by the salmon managers, and a few revisions were made since that review under the September-March timeframe. NOAA, BPA, BOR, Montana, and the COE approved the new plan during today's meeting.

**ACTION:** Other TMT members will review Appendix 2 and submit comments and/or agreement with the document to the DS Consulting Team by Friday, September 28. Email comments to [robin76@cnw.net](mailto:robin76@cnw.net). Comments will be shared with the COE and, upon finalization, the Appendix will be attached to the 2007 WMP and the DRAFT 2008 WMP.

### **Treaty Fishery SOR 2007-C5**

Kyle Dittmer, CRITFC, presented an SOR for last week's treaty fishery, requesting Bonneville pool be maintained at 73.5-74.5', The Dalles pool at 158-159.5', and John Day at 263.5-264'. He noted that the Bonneville pool elevation request was lower than usual due to dredging that was occurring in the Bonneville area. While CRITFC expressed concern for the 2 foot drawdown, their primary interest was in stable pools. He added that discussions and coordination had occurred between the COE, CRITFC and the Federal hatchery on this. Most nets were focused in the John Day area and Kyle offered a suggestion to the COE to consider the net flight surveys in making decisions about how to operate the pools during the treaty fishing season. The Tribes planned to meet on Thursday, September 27, to determine whether to request an additional week of treaty fishing. It was noted that the Seattle District COE holds a permit for dredging until Sunday, September 30, but expected the work to be completed sooner than that. Currently, the requested range was being met at Bonneville.

### **2008 Draft Water Management Plan**

Scott Boyd, COE, said comments on the draft 2008 WMP had been received by Montana and USFWS and posted to the TMT web page. As the plan was written based on the 2004 BiOp, and a 2007 proposed Biological Assessment and BiOp were expected out soon,

several TMT members and CRITFC said they would wait and comment on the new information – which will likely be added to the 2008 Fall/Winter Update (and revised 2008 WMP).

**Special Note:** The next IT meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 8 from 9am-3:00 pm at NOAA Fisheries, at which the draft BiOp will be presented and discussed. TMT members were encouraged to attend that meeting.

**ACTION:** Scott Boyd will add the list of Appendices currently under the 2007 WMP to the 2008 Draft WMP (with the new Appendix 2 Emergency Actions List, per discussions above). The BOR planned to send comments on the 2008 draft soon for posting to the web.

### **Operations Review**

*Reservoirs* – Grand Coulee was at elevation 1284.9’ and slowly filling; the project will stay above elevation 1283’ for kokanee spawning until mid-November. Hungry Horse was at elevation 3537.46’, currently releasing 2.8 kcfs and ramping back down to around 2.4 kcfs to meet Columbia Falls minimums. Libby was at elevation 2435.5’ with 4.5 kcfs in and 6 kcfs out. Per the latest STP, the COE planned to maintain 6 kcfs outflows until October 1, then ramp down to 4.8 kcfs into early November. Albeni Falls was at elevation 2061.3’ with 10.1 kcfs in and 12.5 kcfs out. Dworshak was at elevation 1518.9’ with 1.1 kcfs in and 1.7 kcfs out. Lower Granite averaged 17.2 kcfs inflows, and the 7-day average flows at McNary were 78 kcfs. MOP operations at John Day will end on October 1.

*Fish* – The juvenile Snake River passage season has ended, with very low subyearling numbers in the system. Adult upriver brights are tracking behind the expected migration this year, totaling 113,000 vs. the predicted 192,000. Fisheries managers downgraded their forecast to 118,500 for the year. Spring Creek hatchery adults are also lower than expected; the actual was 16,000 vs. 19,000 predicted. McNary dam counts are down – for the first time in 20 years, fisheries managers are closely watching the escapement goal (45,000 fish) at the project, though it is likely the number will be met this year. The escapement number and ESA-driven harvest rates both impact fishery management throughout the season. Jack counts were very high this year, for both tules and brights.

**ACTION:** Information about passage numbers, harvest, and other fisheries management can be found at: <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/fish/crc/crcindex.htm>. This link will be added to the TMT web page for quick reference.

*Power system* – No report.

*Water quality* – No report.

### **Other**

NRCS is sponsoring a US Drought Forum in the coming month. See the NRCS website for more details.

**Next TMT Meeting, October 24, 9-noon**

An agenda will be developed for the next meeting. Items include:

- Chum Operations
- 2008 WMP and Fall/Winter Update

**Columbia River Regional Forum  
Technical Management Team Meeting  
September 26, 2007**

**1. Introduction**

Today's meeting was chaired by Jim Adams (COE) and facilitated by Robin Gumpert (D.S. Consulting), with representatives from COE, NOAA, USFWS, BPA, BOR, CRITFC, Montana, Idaho and Washington attending. The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the topics discussed and decisions made at the meeting. Anyone with questions or comments about these notes should provide them to the TMT chair or bring them to the next meeting.

**2. Review Meeting Minutes**

There were no comments on previous notes today. Notes for all TMT meetings through September 5 can be considered final.

**3. Albeni Falls Fall and Winter Operations/SOR 2007 – USFWS/IDFG - 1**

Russ Kiefer (Idaho) presented this SOR on behalf of its signatories, the Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game, USFWS, and Pend Oreille/Priest Lakes Commission. The decision tree at the back of the SOR is a proposal to guide operational decisions while balancing the needs of resident fish in Idaho with those of anadromous fish below Bonneville Dam.

The SOR asks that Lake Pend Oreille be held at no lower than elevation 2,055 feet throughout the winter to enhance kokanee spawning. The gravel below that was cleaned by the wave action last year when the lake was held down. Keeping the water level high will provide access to spawning gravel for the kokanee in the lake, as well as an opportunity to observe how well they spawn under such conditions.

Providing flow for chum during a period of high precipitation can cause fish to spawn at elevations that can't be maintained over the winter, and it may result in the redds being dewatered, Kiefer explained. The SOR is based on NOAA's three month forecast for November through January, which shows the Columbia basin receiving above average precipitation. Kyle Dittmer (CRITFC) raised the possibility that this could turn out to be a near-normal water year. BPA pointed out that this operation on average costs BPA customers \$4.4 million and the region as a whole \$12 million when compared to an operation drafting to 2051.

There were no objections to the SOR as presented. The COE will implement it as specified. Kiefer expressed appreciation and added the signatories might request a change if unusual conditions occur.

#### ***4. Lower Granite MOP Operations***

Temperatures at the Orofino gage have been steadily dropping since September 6, with significant cooling on the Clearwater River, Adams said. Yesterday's temperature was 56 degrees F at Orofino, while temperatures at the Anatone gage and throughout the lower Snake River are in the low 60's. More water is needed for the fish holding tanks, so the COE proposed to remove all MOP restrictions on the Lower Granite pool as of today, instead of waiting for October 1 when they would normally expire.

Scott Bettin (BPA) asked, is a minimum elevation of 1 foot needed as a soft constraint? Not at this time since they are only using 2 of the 6 fish holding tanks, Adams said. Meanwhile, the Salmon Managers have discussed this at FPAC and agreed that lifting MOP restrictions at Lower Granite is appropriate, given the natural cooling taking place. Adams will fill TMT in on the details of actual operations at the next TMT meeting.

#### ***5. Little Goose Outage Follow-up***

Doble testing scheduled for October 9 at Little Goose won't be needed after all, Adams said. A recent groundfault occurrence at Little Goose led to a discovery that bad connectors in the transformer need to be replaced, requiring a line outage. The double testing was completed at the same time the T-1 line was out of service for connector replacement. Double testing, initially planned for September, had been delayed until October at TMT's request to avoid impacting adult passage during peak migration.

#### ***6. Emergency Action Plan***

There has been resistance to changing the actual emergency protocols because of the Biological Assessment process this year, Robyn MacKay said. So only the first four bullets of the generation action plan in Appendix 2 have been revised. A preamble explains the pre-emptive actions that would happen before moving to red emergency actions if the pre-emptive actions fail to resolve the situation. MacKay pointed out that new "red action items" have been added to the September-October period, which might involve going outside the 1% spill limitation on the Columbia River instead of drafting from upstream reservoirs.

MacKay asked TMT to consider adopting this revised appendix so the protocols for TMT will be consistent with BPA's protocols for emergencies. The protocols can be revisited at the same time the 2008 Water Management Plan is being reviewed. Adams agreed this is an ideal time process-wise for the COE to work with BPA and the region on protocols for emergencies. Montana, Washington, USFWS, NOAA and BOR representatives were comfortable adopting the appendix without further review; Idaho asked for a little more time to digest the latest version.

## **7. Autumn Treaty Fishing/SOR 2007-C5**

This will probably be the last SOR for the 2007 treaty fishing season, Kyle Dittmer (CRITFC) reported. The SOR covers the period from 6:00 a.m. September 25 to 6:00 p.m. September 28. It requests the following as a soft constraint:

- Maintain Bonneville pool at elevation 73.5 to 74.5 feet (2 feet lower than normally requested).
- Maintain The Dalles pool at elevation 159.5 to 158.5 feet.
- Maintain John Day pool at elevation 264.5 to 263.5 feet.

Contract work authorized by the COE has resulted in lower pool elevations than are normally requested by the tribes, Dittmer said. The permit for that work was issued by the Seattle District to Skamania County on an emergency basis, Adams said. The contract work will probably be completed by tomorrow and no later than September 30. The lowest elevation as a result was 72.6 feet on September 24. The Bonneville pool is now operating within the range specified in the SOR.

Net flight survey information shows that the biggest fishing effort this year focused on the John Day pool, rather than Bonneville pool, Dittmer said. He will continue to provide net flight information to the COE as a measure of tribal priorities. The decision as to whether the treaty fishery will be extended for another week should be made within the next 24 hours. Dittmer was asked if there were any reports from tribal fishermen of problems associated with the way the pools have been operated. He said that none have been reported and that he will check with tribal law enforcement to see.

## **8. Draft 2008 Water Management Plan**

Scott Boyd (COE) asked whether anyone has comments on the draft WMP. Several TMT members expressed reluctance to invest much time in detailed review of the WMP until the draft Bi-Op is released October 31. Montana and Idaho representatives offered a few editorial comments in the meantime. John Roache said BOR would soon provide detailed comments on aspects of the WMP that probably won't change as a result of the new Bi-Op. Russ Kiefer requested that the next WMP draft issued for comments include appendices. Last year's appendices can be used for comments, Boyd said, with the exception of emergency protocols discussed earlier today. Dave Wills (USFWS) suggested making the new protocols available online. Boyd said he would post them, as well as any new comments on the WMP that come in.

Donna Silverberg (DS Consulting) invited TMT members to attend the next IT meeting on November 8, an all-day presentation which will focus mainly on details of the newly released Bi-Op.

## **9. Operations Review**

**a. Reservoirs.** Grand Coulee is at elevation 1,284.9 feet and slowly filling, Roache said. BOR expects to maintain the minimum elevation of 1,283 feet at Grand Coulee from the end of September through approximately mid-November for kokanee spawning.

Hungry Horse is at elevation 3,537.46 feet with approximately 2.8 kcfs outflows. The project is ramping back down to around 2.4 kcfs to meet Columbia Falls minimums. Discharges were temporarily increased to 3.9 kcfs (125 MW minimum generation requirement) on September 24 to allow for repairs on the Libby-Conkelly 230Kv transmission line (gun-shot insulators and conductors)

Libby is at elevation 2,435.5 feet, with inflows of 4.5 kcfs and outflows of 6.0 kcfs. The modeled STP run calls for maintaining outflows of 6.0 kcfs until October 1, then reducing outflows to 4.8 kcfs until early November.

Albeni Falls is at elevation 2,061.3 feet at the Hope gage, with daily average inflows of 10.1 kcfs and outflows of 12.5 kcfs.

Dworshak is at elevation 1,518.9 feet, with inflows of 1.1 kcfs and outflows of 1.7 kcfs. The Lower Granite pool elevation is within MOP range at 733.1 kcfs (daily average). The 7-day inflow average at McNary is 78 kcfs.

**b. Fish.** Passage numbers of subyearling Chinook are in the 20s along the Snake River and in the single digits at Little Goose and Lower Monumental dams. Numbers at McNary were in the low 100s when sampling ceased a few weeks ago, Paul Wagner (NOAA) reported.

Adult counts at Bonneville have been tracking lower than expected this year, Cindy LeFleur (Washington) said. There are about 113,000 bright fish at Bonneville, as compared to a predicted run of 192,000 fish. Hanford and Snake River runs were predicted to be 185,000; the current count is 118,500 fish. Spring Creek Hatchery tule run was predicted to be poor this year, which is turning out to be accurate.

The escapement goal for McNary is 43-45,000 fish, a target that hasn't been hard to meet over the past 20 years. This year, the goal will probably be met, but not by a lot, LeFleur said. In general, Snake River fish have been tracking better than Hanford fish in terms of counts at Lower Granite.



Steelhead runs on average have been tracking closer to predictions, with A-runs (fish that go through tributaries above Bonneville) higher than predicted and B-runs (fish coming in now) lower than predicted. Tule jacks and Spring Creek jacks have been showing up in large numbers everywhere. Preliminary indications show a jack return of about 60%, which is enormous.

For fact sheets containing the latest run and fisheries information, go to <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/fish/crc/crcindex.htm>.

**c. Power System.** There is nothing to report, Robyn MacKay said.

**d. Water Quality.** TDG levels are low and temperatures are dropping, Adams said.

## **10. Next Meetings**

The next regular TMT meeting will be in person on October 24. The beginning of chum season and the water management plan fall/winter update will be among the topics on that agenda. This summary prepared by consultant and writer Pat Vivian.

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